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The Significance of Play in Early Childhood Development

In this report, the importance of play in early childhood is emphasized. This report not only discusses the benefits of play, but the consequences of being deprived from play as well.

Throughout the report, factors that potentially reduce/eliminate play from kids and how these problems can be resolved is examined.

Play not only benefits the physical health of kids, but is extremely beneficial to cognitive and emotional development as well. During play, kids have the opportunity to be creative and imaginative in an unstructured setting. Play during recess has been proven to increase the child's ability to retain new information. Along with better learning skills, play during recess also allows children to interact with their peers and while doing so, they learn social skills such as sharing, leadership, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

For those who are not privileged enough to experience play often, the consequences can be detrimental. A lack of play can cause a delay in social, emotional, and cognitive development, which can then turn into behavioral problems later on in life. Low socioeconomic status kids are the ones who are highly affected by not being able to play often. This is highly due to schools in low-income communities having a desire to reduce the academic disparities between social classes and, in doing so, reduce the amount of recess given to children thinking it's the only way to get their academics to improve. Another reason for reduced play is parents. Parents tend to have the misconception that children this young are not mature enough to have unstructured play and that school is solely for academics, not play. This misconception has led to the decrease/elimination of recess in some schools. With little to no recess time, children in poverty

have a significant decrease in play time altogether. Poor children usually live in unfit (dangerous) communities for children to play in and their parents don't have time to play with them. If these children are not outside socializing and playing, then they are engaging in non-active activities such as watching t.v. or playing video games. This type of life-style in early childhood is linked to health problems which include substance abuse, obesity, depression and lack of self-confidence.

Although circumstantial reasons deprive these kids from play, there are multiple things that can be done to increase the opportunities for low-income children to play safely and productively. First, schools and parents have to realize that play should also be as important as academics during early childhood. Advocates, policy-makers, and community leaders must collaborate with each other to ensure that there are resources for low income families to utilize, such as Head Start.

This report was structurally well written and validated by over 70 reliable resources. This report was published in 2011 which is a bit out of date, which means it might not be up to date with some of the statistics, however the problems discussed are still prevalent today. Something I felt that the report should've included is more statistical numbers on the prevalence of students who acquire behavioral problems due to limited amount of play compared to those who are not limited. With recess time declining in Texas' schools, this report is extremely applicable today.

Reference:

Milteer, R. M., Ginsburg, K. R., & Mulligan, D. A. (2011, December 26). The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bond: Focus on Children in Poverty. *PEDIATRICS*, 129(1), 204–213.
<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2953>.